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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 09/26/08

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ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
September 26, 2008

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. Bracketed figures denote proportions to all respondents.)

Q: We ask about the now-inaugurated cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso. Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 48

No 36

Q: Why? (One reason only. Left column for those marking "yes" on previous question, and right for those saying "no.")

The prime minister is Mr. Aso 37(18) 9(3)

It's an LDP-led cabinet 21(10) 54(20)

From the aspect of policies 23(11) 22(8)

Cabinet lineup 13(6) 12(4)

Q: Which political party do you support now? (Figures in parentheses denote findings from the last survey conducted Sept. 10-11.)

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 34 (29)

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 23 (19)

New Komeito (NK) 3 (2)

Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 2 (2)

Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1 (1)

People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (0)

New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)

Other political parties 0 (0)

None 32 (40)

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No answer (N/A) + don't know (D/K) 5 (7)

Q: Do you think Mr. Aso is a person of action?

Yes 54

No 28

Q: Do you think Mr. Aso is a politician in touch with the popular sentiment?

Yes 32

No 54

Q: Mr. Aso has now become prime minister. What's your impression of the LDP?

Improved 15

Worsened 7

Unchanged 74

Q: Prime Minister Aso has clarified that he will fast-track economic stimulus measures even by putting off the goal of fiscal reconstruction. Do you support this policy?

Yes 64

No 18

Q: If you were to vote now in a general election for the House of Representatives, which political party would you like to vote for in your proportional representation bloc? (Figures in parentheses denote findings from a survey taken Sept. 2-3 before the last survey.)

LDP 36 (28)

DPJ 32 (32)

NK 4 (4)

JCP 4 (3)

SDP 1 (2)

PNP 0 (1)

NPN 0 (0)

Other political parties 1 (0)

N/A+D/K 22 (30)

Q: Would you like the current LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government?

LDP-led coalition 39 (32)

DPJ-led coalition 40 (41)

Q: Which one between Prime Minister Aso and DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa do you think is more appropriate for prime minister?

Mr. Aso 54

Mr. Ozawa 26

Q: Do you think it would be better for Japan to have the ruling and opposition parties change places at times?

Yes 73

No 21

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Polling methodology: The survey was conducted from the evening of Sept. 24 through the evening of Sept. 25, after the cabinet lineup was announced, over the telephone on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Respondents were chosen from among the nation's voting population on a three-stage random-sampling basis. Valid answers were obtained from 1,014 persons (56 PERCENT ).

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(2) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)

September 26, 2008

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote findings for the Fukuda cabinet from the last survey conducted in late August.)

Q: Do you support the new Aso cabinet?

Yes 53 (29)

No 40 (63)

Can't say (C/S) + don't know (D/K) 7 (8)

Q: Which political party do you support or like now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 41 (37)

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 31 (30)

New Komeito (NK) 4 (3)

Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 4 (4)

Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 2 (2)

People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 1 (0)

New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)

Other political parties 0 (1)

None 13 (16)

C/S+D/K 4 (6)

(Note) The total percentage does not become 100 PERCENT in some cases due to rounding

Polling methodology: The survey was taken Sept. 24-25 by Nikkei Research Inc. by telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,341 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 780 persons (59.2 PERCENT ).

(3) Okinawa experts leave office, prefectural government feeling uneasy; Futenma relocation may be retarded

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)

September 25, 2008

The Aso cabinet made its debut yesterday, installing a lineup of former Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister

Takeo Kawamura as chief cabinet secretary, former Education Minister Hirofumi Nakasone as foreign minister, and former Senior Vice Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada as defense minister. The new cabinet has replaced its ministers involved in the issue of relocating Futenma airfield. A group of working-level officials is now consulting on the issue. However, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary

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Masahiro Futahashi, who is the government's top bureaucrat and has responded flexibly to Okinawa's propositions, has also been replaced with former National Police Agency Commissioner General Iwao Uruma. Those concerned are worried about the replacement of officials familiar with Okinawa issues, fearing that Futenma relocation may be retarded.

"It's beyond my expectations. I don't know at all what this is all about."

With this, a senior official of the Defense Ministry shook his head, wondering why Kawamura has been appointed to the post of chief cabinet secretary.

On the issue of relocating Futenma airfield, the government plans to lay down a V-shaped pair of airstrips (in a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Okinawa Prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago). Concerning this plan, Okinawa Prefecture has proposed moving out the newly planned airfield's construction site into the sea. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura has displayed powerful leadership over this offshore relocation and other Futenma-related issues, so the focus was on who will take over his role. Machimura has now been replaced with Kawamura, who has had little to do with Okinawa and is not well posted on security affairs.

Futahashi, who has shored up Machimura at the prime minister's office (Kantei), has also been replaced. "The Kantei will lose its momentum," the senior official said.

Meanwhile, Japan and the United States have reached an intergovernmental agreement on the V-shaped airfield plan. The government used to take coercive measures under the Defense Ministry's initiative until last year-such as promoting pump-priming projects for the prefecture's northern districts and freezing its subsidization of base-hosting municipalities-in order to have them accept the plan. Okinawa's distrust of the government peaked, and the issue of Futenma relocation was at a deadlock.

However, Machimura, after becoming chief cabinet secretary for the Fukuda cabinet that came into office in September last year, concentrated his efforts with Futahashi on recovering Okinawa's trust. Machimura was flexible about the Okinawa prefectural government's proposal to move the V-shaped facility's site offshore, and he went so far as to have the Defense Ministry change its officials in charge of the Futenma issue.

One government official, who knows such circumstances, recalled that government officials like Machimura and Futahashi were "exceptional" for Okinawa Prefecture.

That government official, however, stressed the existence of two working teams launched in August this year. One of the two teams studies ways to remove the danger of Futenma airfield, and the other team discusses issues relating to the government's plan to build a Futenma alternative and its environmental impact assessment. "Whoever may become minister," the official said, "we will push for the work in a steady manner." Another senior official of the Defense Ministry also said, "It's good we've set up the working teams."

However, the House of Representatives is now expected to be dissolved in early October for a general election. There are conjectures going around in government. "If the DPJ (Democratic

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Party of Japan) is elected to office," one government official said, "the (Futenma) agreement between Japan and the United States will be

blown off." Another official said, "Even if the DPJ takes office, they cannot change the course of action over Futenma." The government is in turmoil over the Futenma issue.

(4) George Washington deployed at Yokosuka; Port may become base for nuclear-powered warships

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)  
September 26, 2008

By nuclear-powered carrier news coverage team

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington (GW) arrived yesterday at U.S. Yokosuka Naval Base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. She is the first U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier deployed outside the United States. The deployment renewed the impression that Yokosuka is one of the most important military bases in Asia. At the same time, with the deployment, nuclear hazards are now looming over Yokosuka.

? Homeport functions

In April, 2006, a delegation composed of Yokosuka City assembly members and business leaders visited a naval base in San Diego to take a firsthand look at safety measures for the GW ahead of its (Yokosuka) deployment. Before the group, a senior U.S. Navy officer emphasized the strategic importance of Yokosuka, saying: "It takes about two weeks to cross the Pacific Ocean from a base on the U.S. West Coast. The Yokosuka base that enables rapid deployments in the western Pacific is extremely important."

The Yokosuka base is now even more important with additional functions for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to homeport there. The USS Kitty Hawk, a conventional aircraft carrier, has now been mothballed and replaced with the GW. The U.S. Navy currently has a total of 11 flattops, which are all nuclear-powered. For the forward deployment of an aircraft carrier, Yokosuka must have the ability to berth nuclear-powered vessels.

A homeport for a nuclear-powered flattop must meet strict requirements. To take in cooling water for the nuclear reactors of a nuclear carrier from its bottom, the berth must have a depth of at least 15 meters for safety control. The homeport also needs facilities to provide pure water and power. There are no bases in Japan that meet these requirements.

Repair functions are also indispensable. The Yokosuka base has a salvage-barge-turned-repair factory, in addition to a ship repair facility (SRF) with 1,800 workers. When the aircraft carrier is in the port, about 500 engineers from the United States carry out maintenance work in restricted areas near the reactors and other places.

"In the western Pacific, Hawaii and Guam have bases that can berth nuclear-powered carriers, but all in all, Yokosuka is above them (as a homeport). To the U.S. military, it is a drawback that it has to give consideration to Japanese public opinion. Once that is resolved, Yokosuka would become a naval base that does not present any difficulties for use by nuclear-powered vessels other than the GW."

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? A new agreement

Hiromichi Umebayashi, who is well-versed in U.S. military strategies and activities as a special adviser to Peace Depot, a nonprofit organization, has pointed out the possibility of (Yokosuka) becoming a base for nuclear-powered vessels.

Owing to the dredging work conducted by the government, not only the dedicated dock but also the quay on the other side of the port can now moor aircraft carriers. With the completion of the dock for use by nuclear-powered submarines, the stage is being set to handle a growing number of visits by nuclear-powered vessels.

Although chances for accidents grow as visits increase, Japan is not allowed to tamper with the nuclear-reactor safety regulations and other matters due to international law and military secrecy.

Concerned about nuclear hazards, the city of Yokosuka has concluded a disaster prevention agreement with the U.S. Navy. Umebayashi noted: "The deployment of a nuclear-powered vessel is a diplomatic issue. It is absurd that there is no new intergovernmental accord on matters, including the right to board nuclear-powered vessels." Umebayashi also expressed concern over the Japanese government's weak sense of crisis, saying: "Should an accident occur, who will take responsibility and pay compensation? Japan is not allowed to make efforts to determine the cause. Under such circumstances, can Tokyo hold talks with Washington to defend Japan's national interests and its people on an equal footing?"

With the deployment, nuclear hazards could now hang over the metropolitan area. Liberal Democratic Party National Defense Division Chairman Katsuhito Asano emphatically said: "Should accidents, such as radiation leakage, occur, that would rock the foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance. We will urge the government to ensure safety 200 PERCENT in talks with the United States." Anxiety is still multiplying.

(5) Editorial: Deployment of nuclear-powered aircraft carrier at Yokosuka port: Japanese, U.S. governments should take every possible measure to ensure safety

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
September 26, 2008

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington arrived yesterday at the Yokosuka U.S. Navy Base in Kanagawa Prefecture for deployment. The George Washington is the first U.S. nuclear flattop homeported outside the U.S.

US Naval Forces Japan publicized a 200-page comic book introducing the George Washington and distributed copies in the city. It was issued in April this year. A Japanese-American fresh recruit is the main character of its story. The book depicts the inside of the carrier, drills and crew members' daily lives. The aim appears to be to reduce local anxieties.

The comic book also includes a scene of a fire on the George Washington at sea, with the rookie sailor trying to extinguish it.

The fire actually broke out in May on the George Washington as it was underway off South America for Japan, injuring 37 crewmembers.

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Her navigation was not affected in the book. However, in reality, the vessel arrived at Yokosuka more than a month later than scheduled. In the book, the cause of the fire was an overheated washing machine. But the actual fire was caused by a cigarette butt.

Minor trouble or accidents could happen to nuclear-powered warships, with the possibility of exploding into a serious incident involving base-neighboring residents. We take it for granted that the Japanese and U.S. governments take measures to prevent such accidents and prepare for a possible occurrence of such eventualities.

The U.S. provided a fact sheet on the safety of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers to the Japanese government in 2006 in preparation for the George Washington's Yokosuka deployment. That document is written from the standpoint that accidents will not occur, by repeatedly noting that a scenario depicting an occurrence of an accident is very unrealistic. It also emphasizes that port calls by nuclear-powered U.S. vessels in Japan did not increase radioactivity there at all.

However, many are skeptical of this claim. When the nuclear submarine Swordfish entered Sasebo port in Nagasaki Prefecture in May 1968, Japan's radioactivity monitoring ship detected radiation. Its readout was 10 to 20 times higher than normal levels. In September 2006, cobalt 58 and cobalt 60 were detected, when the

nuclear submarine Honolulu left Yokosuka port. In both cases, the U.S. ruled out the possibility of any links to the nuclear submarines. The truth of the incident was left undetermined. It was also brought to light last month that cooling water had leaked from the nuclear submarine Houston, which was anchored off White Beach in Okinawa Prefecture, and called at Sasebo, from June 2006 through July this year.

The U.S. Navy's military secrecy is hampering Japan's efforts to respond to such accidents. When a U.S. nuclear submarine first entered a Japanese port, the U.S. government declared in a statement that it would not provide technical information. The document also noted that the U.S. would not allow Japanese authorities to board U.S. nuclear ships with the aim of obtaining technical information. Regarding information on the radiation leaks from the Houston, the Japanese Foreign Ministry had no choice but to release what was provided by the U.S. side.

In the event of an accident or when there is a possibility of an accident occurring, it is not enough to just depend on notification sent by the U.S. military. The Japanese government should make arrangements with the U.S. government for sufficient measures, including boarding inspections. Otherwise, it cannot address anxieties felt by the local residents.

(6) Editorial: Deployment of U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier at Yokosuka dogged by anxiety

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)  
September 26, 2008

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington arrived yesterday at its new home port of Yokosuka Naval Base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. It is the first time for a U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier to be deployed in Japan. Although the U.S. guarantees its safety, local residents are worried about safe

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management of the carrier by the U.S. alone. It is indispensable for the Japanese government to proactively take part in safety management of the vessel in order to prevent an accident.

The USS George Washington, carrying dozens of aircraft, arrived at the U.S. base yesterday. The carrier measures 332 meters in length and accommodates about 6,000 crew members. It is powered by two reactors, equivalent to a small-sized nuclear power plant. The vessel is just like a small town transferred from the U.S. to Japan.

In the base, a welcome ceremony was held, while civic groups staged rallies against the deployment outside the base. One group held up a banner reading: "We need no nuclear-powered aircraft carrier," showing strong concern among citizens about the floating nuclear power plant. The governments of Japan and the U.S. should take their reaction seriously.

The carrier replaces the conventional aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk, which is to be decommissioned due to its age. The replacement is based on the U.S. global strategy to cover a wide-ranging area encompassing the western Pacific to the Middle East with a versatile aircraft carrier, eyeing the security situations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Prime Minister Taro Aso welcomed the deployment, remarking: "The Korean Peninsula and other areas around Japan are in a difficult situation. The deployment is very desirable in view also of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty." The Japanese and U.S. governments, which are proud of the U.S.-Japan global alliance, must be seeing the deployment of the USS George Washington in Japan as a symbol of the alliance.

A major problem is that the local government hosting the base may be pressed with a heavier burden as a result of accepting the nuclear aircraft carrier. Satisfactory safety measures must be taken to prevent a radiation leak.

The U.S. Navy underscores that there has been no nuclear accident involving one of its vessels that negatively impacted human health over the past some 50 years. The U.S. says that it will never repair the reactors in Japan. Yokosuka approved the deployment on such conditions as strengthening the safety-management system.

Even so, the U.S. has not disclosed detailed data on the reactors, defining such data as classified military information. Japanese authorities are not allowed even to conduct an on-the-spot inspection. Many restrictions have been imposed on activities by the government, which should be responsible for protecting the safety of local residents with responsibility.

In May, a fire broke out while crew members were smoking on the USS George Washington. It was also learned that radioactive water had been leaking from a U.S. nuclear-powered submarine. Under such circumstances, even if the U.S. says it is taking the utmost care in safety management of the aircraft carrier, we cannot be easily convinced.

It will be the reverse of our intention if the people have anxiety due to the strengthened U.S.-Japan alliance. The government's involvement in safety management of the nuclear aircraft carrier is totally insufficient. Japan should present more requests to the U.S.

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so that Japan will be able to publicize information and verify the level of safety of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

(7) Editorial: Can U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier become fortress for peace?

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)  
September 26, 2008

The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington showed its huge bulk in Tokyo Bay. It is a floating fortress that can carry more than 70 aircraft.

This is the fourth aircraft carrier to be homeported at Yokosuka since the USS Midway in 1973. The George Washington is the first nuclear-powered vessel.

The U.S. has thus far deployed conventional aircraft carriers in Japan, giving consideration to its A-bomb experience. However, it decided to deploy the nuclear-powered USS George Washington, following the decommissioning of the aging Kitty Hawk -- the U.S. Navy's last conventional aircraft carrier.

The deployment of the George Washington means more than the simple replacement of an aircraft carrier.

The U.S. Navy is operating throughout the world. However, Yokosuka is the only overseas homeport for one of its aircraft carriers. This is because Yokosuka is useful for keeping an eye on areas stretching from the Pacific to the Arabian Sea as well as because of the Japanese government's generous assistance. The presence of Yokosuka is symbolic for the Japan-U.S. alliance.

The operational areas covered by U.S. warships based in Yokosuka go far beyond Japan and its nearby areas, as can be seen in the fact that they played a leading role in missile attacks in the 1991 Gulf War and the Iraq war. The George Washington with its higher deployment capacity has come to Japan amid the U.S. Navy pressing ahead with realignment due to the war on terror.

Ambassador Schieffer during the welcome ceremony said, "The U.S. has no alliance that is more important than the Japan-U.S. alliance." He must have made that statement in such a context.

Another aim of the deployment of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in Yokosuka is to check China, which plans to build a blue-water navy.

The idea of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty is for Japan to provide military bases to the U.S. and the U.S. to protect Japan with its



deterrent capability. Heightened deterrent capability thanks to the deployment of a new aircraft carrier will contribute to Japan's security.

On the other hand, the deployment of military power could heighten tension. It is fresh in our memory that in 1996, when China-Taiwan relations were strained, two U.S. aircraft carriers put on a show of military power in the sea near Taiwan. It is not until foreign relations and deterrent power are in harmony that both U.S.-China relations and the Korean Peninsula will see peace.

The Japanese government should receive more information from the

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U.S. on its activities based in Japan, starting with Yokosuka. Taxpayers need to discuss the management of the alliance, based on the information provided.

What is more important is the safety of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. The thermal power of the reactor on this carrier is equivalent to a commercial nuclear reactor. The U.S. Navy explained that there has been no major accident involving a nuclear-powered ship. However, it was just recently found that there was a minor radiation leak from a nuclear-powered submarine. There is fear that even if an accident occurs, information may not be disclosed, using security protection as a justification. It is only natural for people in Yokosuka and Sasebo to feel strong anxiety.

If such a situation becomes reality, the stable provision of military bases would become impossible. It is mandatory for the Japanese government to secure maximum cooperation from the U.S. Navy regarding an inspection system, the creation of a system for the provision of information, and the implementation of drills in readiness for an emergency.

(8) Japan, U.S., European countries likely to resubmit resolution criticizing North Korea to UN

ASAHI (Page ?) (Full)  
September 12, 2008

By Tsutomu Ishiai

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (for International Organization Affairs) James B. Warlick, in an interview with an Asahi Shimbun reporter on Sept. 12 in Tokyo, indicated that a resolution critical of North Korea's human rights situation, including the abduction issue, will be submitted again this fall, following one last year, to the UN Third Committee, which handles human rights issues. The expectation is that Japan, the United States, and major European countries will jointly submit the resolution.

Warlick underscored the necessity of discussion at the Third Committee in November regardless of whether there is any improvement on the nuclear issue. He stated: "The abductions are a serious issue for the United States, as well." He indicated that the U.S. government will talk with the Japanese government on such matters as whether the planned resolution should be stricter than last year's, which referred to "an immediate handover of Japanese abductees to Japan."

Regarding the Russia-Georgia conflict, Warlick said: "I hope" that Japan, which aims to secure a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council next year, "will become a partner." He then urged Japan to act in concert with the United States, which has taken a position of favoring Georgia. He revealed that the U.S. government will invite Japanese officials probably before the end of the year to Washington to discuss concrete measures.

SCHIEFFER